

Presentation No. Two

PRODUCING QUALITY TOBACCO LEAF

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Available: Transcript - No
Pre-conference excerpt - Yes

The U.S. 1983 crop is late and irregular. Early rain interfered with crop preparation. Drought followed, with temperatures too hot for the best product. Blue mold, an old disease with a new form these days, occurred early, with more damage to burley than other varieties. Black shank, a root disease (fungus) caused leaf wilting and could have damaged root systems. Growers have controls available for these problems and Dr. Todd did not elaborate whether or not these were used to full advantage this year. Yields were low but quality was better than expected. In general, producing quality leaf is a difficult, full season job of 100 tasks. Many factors are involved: soil type; disease; insect, weed, and sucker control; weather; land preparation, fertilization, and cultivation; harvesting and curing methods. Growers have control over some of these but not all. Irrigation pays off most when applied at topping time; burley requires more and more consistent; dark tobacco can do best without. For fertilization, nitrogen affects quality the most. No single formula works best, all soils are different. Some growers say quality leaf is the kind they produced last year or the kind most in demand. Apparently high leaf quality is a combination of characteristics that may be present in varying degrees. Ripe or mellow is better than unripe; open leaf is better than closed; strong color is better than pale, etc. Most essential is a healthy root system, enhanced by an up front good disease control system. Start with an abundant supply of healthy transplants (3 times that required). Space rows wide (not done in U.S.). For quality plant control Canada uses hot houses and grading. Flat cultivation and too much water will interfere with quality. Soil should be pushed up around plants for drainage and moisture conservation. High, wide beds are best. Sucker control can be accomplished by hand or chemically. Chemicals may be applied from drop lines in the field; one good method is a triple nozzle motorized boom, spraying above top leaves. There are problems with chemical residues; new technology (Prime Plus) is available; may involve some problems. One secret to producing a quality leaf appears to do whatever is required for a fast, healthy start followed by early maturity and careful preparation of each step right through market preparation.

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